(b) whether any committee has been constituted to approve of the merits;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether any guidelines have been formulated for this purpose; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) to (e) In August, 2002 the Government has issued two notifications (No. 82/ 2002-Customs and 39/2002-Central Excise both dated 13.8.2002), allowing the facility of duty free imports/procurement of goods to the developers of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for the purpose of development, construction and maintenance of SEZs. The import/ procurement of goods is subject to approval by an inter-ministerial Committee. For the purpose of availing the benefit of above notifications, the developers of the SEZ are required to make an application to the concerned Development Commissioner for approval of the list of goods proposed to be imported/procured duty free. The Development Commissioner is required to process the same and place the list before the aforesaid Committee for approval of such duty-free imports/ procurement.

Detailed guidelines have been laid down by the Government in this behalf.

Norms for Lending to Agriculture

2734. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Reserve Bank of India has relaxed the norms for priority sector lending to agriculture;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether lending to agriclinics and agribusiness centers would under the revised guidelines qualify as direct loans to the agricultural sector; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) to (b) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reported that it has liberalized the norms for priority sector lending in agriculture in respect of activities relating to the distribution of inputs for activities allied to agriculture, produce marketing loans, financing of dealers in agricultural machinery etc. In so far the distribution of inputs, such as cattle feed, poultry feeds, etc. the limit has been increased to Rs. 25 lakh from Rs. 15 lakh. The credit limit under Produce Marketing Loans has been increased to Rs. 5 lakh from the present limit of Rs. 1 lakh. The repayment schedule for such credit has also been enhanced to twelve months from six months. In so far the financing of dealers in drip irrigation/sprinkler irrigation system/agricultural machinery, the limit has been increased from Rs. 10 lakh to Rs. 20 lakh.

(c) and (d) As reported by RBI, the finance extended by banks under the scheme for financing Agri-clinics and Agri-business centers will be treated as direct finance to agriculture under priority sector lending. Banks have, accordingly been advised in August, 2002 in this regard.

Task force on withdrawal of concessions

2735. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether an eleven members task force has recently been set up to consider proposals for withdrawal of various concessions and exemptions from the next year;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when the task force is likely to submit its report and by when the withdrawal is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.This Task Force is headed by Dr. Vijay Kelkar with the following terms of reference:—

(i) Rationalization and simplification of the direct taxes with a view to minimizing exemptions, removing anomalies and improving